

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L PALERMO 0609

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, IT
SUBJ: CARABINIERI COLONEL MURDERED

1. MORE OUT OF SOLIDARITY WITH THE SORELY-TRIED CARABINIERI THAN FOR REQUIREMENTS OF PROTOCOL, I ATTENDED FUNERAL SERVICES ON AUGUST 23 FOR LT. COL. GIUSEPPE RUSSO WHO HAD BEEN AMBUSHED AND MURDERED ON AUGUST 20 WHILE ON VACATION IN A SMALL TOWN NEAR CORLEONE IN PALERMO PROVINCE. KILLED WITH RUSSO WAS A HIGH-SCHOOL PROFESSOR FRIEND, FILIPPO COSTA, WHO SOME SAY HAD LINKS TO THE MAFIA AND SERVED RUSSO AS AN INFORMANT. THEY WERE GUNNED DOWN BY THREE MEN (A FOURTH DROVE THE GET-A-WAY CAR) IN AN AMBUSH WHICH HAD THE STANDARD EARMARKS OF A VERY WELL-EXECUTED MAFIA OPERATION.

2. ASSIGNED AS A JUNIOR OFFICER TO PALERMO MORE THAN 20 YEARS AGO, RUSSO HAD SPENT MOST OF HIS CAREER IN ANTI-MAFIA ACTIVITIES, MOST RECENTLY AS HEAD OF THE LOCAL CARABINIERI COMMAND'S INVESTIGATIVE UNIT. PLACED AT HIS OWN REQUEST ON CONVALESCENT LEAVE SOME 8 MONTHS AGO, RUSSO WAS REPORTEDLY SEEKING EARLY RETIREMENT TO ENTER PRIVATE BUSINESS.

3. WHILE THEORIES ARE LEGION ON THE REASONS FOR RUSSO'S MURDER, THERE SEEMS LITTLE DOUBT THAT IT WAS CARRIED OUT BY THE MAFIA. IF SO, THE RECORD WOULD SUGGEST THAT THE
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KILLERS OR AT LEAST THOSE WHO ORDERED THEM INTO ACTION, WILL NEVER BE BROUGHT TO TRIAL LET ALONE CONVICTED. COL. RUSSO'S MURDER ALSO GOES AGAINST THE THEORY THAT THE MAFIA DOES NOT KILL SENIOR POLICE/CARABINIERI OFFICERS OR DISTRICT ATTORNEYS. SENTIMENTALISTS SAY THAT THIS IS OUT OF RESPECT FOR HONORED ADVERSARIES. THE REAL REASON IS THAT SUCH ACTION INVARIABLY PROMPTS A SERIES OF TOUGH, REPRESSIVE

MEASURES WHICH DISTURB THE MAFIA'S OPERATIONAL ENVIRONMENT. INDEED, MAFIA FAIR-PLAY WITH THE POLICE HAS PROBABLY BEEN A MYTH SINCE JOSEPH PETROSINO OF THE NEW YORK POLICE DEPARTMENT WAS GUNNED DOWN IN PALERMO IN 1909. CERTAINLY, THE STILL-UNIDENTIFIED KILLERS OF PALERMO PROSECUTING ATTORNEY, PIETRO SCAGLIONE, MURDERED IN PALERMO IN 1971, OBSERVED NO SUCH CODE OF ETHICS.

4. AS FOR THE PRESENT SLAYING, THE CHIEF OF THE PALERMO POLICE FLYING SQUAD - AN OLD COMRADE AT ARMS OF RUSSO'S, AND FIRST ON THE SCENE AFTER THE MURDER - TOLD US HE BELIEVED RUSSO HAD BEEN FOLLOWING UP PERSONALLY ON MAFIA ACTIVITIES EVEN WHILE ON CONVALESCENT LEAVE. IN HIS VIEW, WHILE THE MAFIA MIGHT WELL CONTINUE TO RESPECT THOSE ON ACTIVE DUTY CARRYING OUT INVESTIGATIONS AGAINST IT, IT WILL NOT TOLERATE ANTI-MAFIA ACTIVITIES AS A PERSONAL HOBBY. COLLINS

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